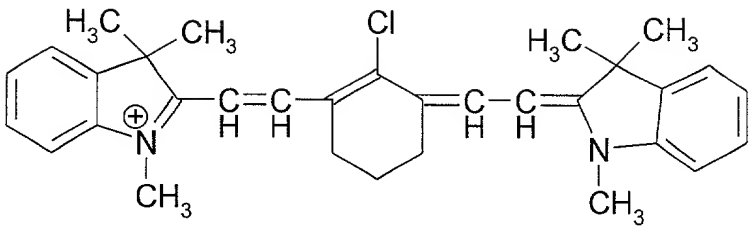
CLAIMS

1. A lithographic printing form precursor having an imagable coating on a aluminum support, wherein the imagable coating comprises a polymeric substance comprising colorant groups, wherein the aluminum support on which the coating is provided is anodized but not subsequently modified by means of a post-anodic treatment compound, and wherein the coating does not comprise a free colorant dye.

2. A precursor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polymeric substance is derived from a polymer comprising hydroxyl groups, able to react with a colorant compound or moiety.

3. A precursor as claimed in claim 2, wherein the polymeric substance is selected from the group comprising a phenolic resin selected from the group consisting of a novolac resin, a resole resin, a novolac/resole resin mixture and polyhydroxystyrene or a copolymer of hydroxystyrene, in each case comprising colorant groups.

4. A precursor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polymeric substance comprises colorant groups derived from the group comprising triarylmethane dyes, quaternized heterocyclic compounds, quinolinium compounds, benzothiazolium compounds, pyridinium compounds, polymethine dyes, cyanine dyes, Methylene blue, or a dye having the cation



5. A precursor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polymeric substance comprises infra-red absorbing groups.

6. A precursor as claimed in claim 5, wherein the infra-red absorbing groups are also colorant groups.

7. A precursor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the composition comprises a free infra-red absorbing compound.

8. A precursor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polymeric substance comprises reversible insolubilizer groups.

9. A precursor as claimed in claim 8, wherein the reversible insolubilizer groups are also colorant groups.

10. A precursor as claimed in claim 8, wherein reversible insolubilizer groups are selected from -O-SO_2-tolyl, -O-dansyl, -O-SO_2-thienyl, -O-SO_2-naphthyl and -O-CO-Ph and diazide functional groups.

11. A precursor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polymeric substance comprises colorant groups, and which also act as infra-red absorbing groups, and which also act as reversible insolubilizer groups.

12. A precursor as claimed in claim 11, wherein the functional groups are polymethine dyes or cyanine dyes.

13. A precursor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the composition comprises a free compound which acts as a reversible insolubilizer compound.

14. A precursor as claimed in claim 13, wherein the reversible insolubilizer compound is selected from the group consisting of -naphthoflavone, -naphthoflavone, 2,3-diphenyl-1-indeneone, flavone, flavanone, xanthone, benzophenone, N-(4-bromobutyl)phthalimide and phenanthrenequinone.

15 A precursor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the composition comprises a pigment.

16. A precursor as claimed in claim 15, wherein the pigment is carbon black, lamp black, furnace black, channel black, iron (III) oxide, manganese oxide, Milori Blue, Paris Blue, Prussian Blue, Heliogen Green or Nigrosine Base NG1.

17. A method of preparing a lithographic printing form precursor having an imagable coating on an aluminum support, the method comprising the steps of:

a) anodising an aluminum sheet (which is to serve as the support); and

b) without having effected a chemical treatment step after the anodising step, applying a composition comprising a polymeric substance to the anodised surface of the aluminum sheet and drying the composition to form the imagable coating thereon, wherein the polymeric substance comprises pendent colorant groups, and wherein the composition does not contain a free colorant dye.

18. A method of making a printing form from a printing form precursor, the precursor comprising an imagable coating on an aluminum support, wherein the imagable coating comprises a polymeric substance comprising colorant groups, the aluminum support on which the coating is provided is anodized but not subsequently modified by means of a post-anodic treatment, and wherein the coating does not comprise a colorant dye, the method comprising the steps of:

a) exposing the coating imagewise; and

b) removing the exposed regions of the coating using a developer liquid.

19. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein the developer liquid is an aqueous alkaline developer.

20. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein imagewise exposure is effected by contacting the coating with a heat stylus.

21 A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein imagewise exposure of the coating is effected using electromagnetic radiation having a wavelength between 600 and 1400 nm, the coating containing means for absorbing radiation of such wavelength and producing heat.

22. A printing form prepared by the method of claim 18.